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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1377  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, ECA/PE/CE,

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PCUL](#) [PINR](#) [KPAO](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: REQUEST FOR ECA SPORTS PROJECTS

¶1. Post has witnessed a slow and gradual opening of Turkmenistan since February 2007. Under President Berdimuhamedov, physical education was re-introduced into secondary schools and universities. Berdimuhamedov also frequently emphasizes the value of cultural exchanges. Post believes that in this current environment, the Sports Envoy Program will be more than welcomed and well supported by the Turkmen government. Post sees the Sports Envoy Program as a mechanism to teach leadership and teamwork in secondary schools and universities.

THE NEED IS GREAT

¶2. President Niyazov halted sports and physical education in secondary schools. From 2002 to 2007, the number of years of compulsory primary/secondary education went from 10 to 9 years. This decline in education, sports and the arts has made creative cultural and sports programming an integral part of achieving our MSP goals. Post has been able to reach out to Muslim Turkmen audiences through cultural and sports events and programming to promote concepts such as self-expression, equality and leadership where direct programming on such themes is extremely difficult.

REQUEST FOR SPORTS ENVOYS

¶3. Sports is underdeveloped in Turkmenistan. It lacks financial support from the Government and lost many professional coaches and trainers during post-Independence liberation in 1992. Post would like to invite Sports Envoys in soccer, basketball, and/or volleyball. Post is planning to organize clinics and speaking engagements both at secondary schools and universities to promote sports and American values.

¶4. Post would like to invite the Sports Envoy in spring or fall in time to organize the programs in schools. The Turkmen side will mostly provide logistical support, as well as in-kind space and equipment supply whenever possible. Ideally, the programs will last a week, excluding international travel days.

¶5. Post is also planning to conduct a 5K marathon, around Earth Day to promote healthy lifestyles, as well as Turkmen-American cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, which will lead to greater mutual understanding and will build a more favourable attitude towards America. Post would like to invite one of the

Envoys during this time to provide support and be a guest athlete, who will officially open the marathon.

¶6. Post would also like to invite an appropriate athlete and/or coach in volleyball or basketball for summer camps, organized annually by the Paralympics of Turkmenistan and the Disabled Sportsmen Club for disabled sportsmen.

#### REQUEST FOR SPORTS VISITORS

¶7. (U) As a follow up to the Sports Envoy programs, Post would like to send two or three groups of selected athletes, managers and coaches to the United States to get a first hand experience on how professional athletes are trained in the U.S., how sports is used for team-building and conflict resolution. Selection of the kind of sports group and their composition will be done during the Envoy program, where the best and the most interested groups will be identified by the Envoys.

¶7. For all sports programs that will take place, Post will work closely with the Ministry of Culture and TV/Radio broadcasting to gain the maximum coverage of American athletes/coaches programs through TV and Radio interviews, coverage of the clinics and speaking events to maximize the public awareness.

#### POST PREVIOUS SPORTS PROGRAMMING EXPERIENCE

¶8. Post has enough staffing in the cultural section to play an active role in program design and implementation, as well as provide necessary support to the Envoys and Sports Visitors. Post will provide housing and transportation support as needed.

¶9. Post organized a program with an IIP speaker on Sports in

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America in 2004, and this program proved to be very useful and post was able to reach out to those audiences it cannot reach otherwise, such as State Committee for sports and Tourism, National Olympics and Paralympics of Turkmenistan, coaches and sportsmen, teachers and students from the Sports and Tourism Institute. All audiences were excited to learn about the value of sports in America, American athletes and how American football is played.

¶10. Post contacts for sports programs:

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